

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB LE

SUBJECT: NATIONWIDE STRIKE OF TEACHERS IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS CONTINUES

1. STRIKE INVOLVING MORE THAN 20,000 TEACHERS IN APPROXIMATELY 3,000 PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS THROUGHOUT LEBANON HAS ENTERED SECOND WEEK, WITH NO END IN SIGHT. TEACHERS, REPRESENTED BY TWO SEPARATE AND MUTUALLY-ANTAGONISTIC SYNDICATES, WALKED OUT OF CLASSROOMS JAN 7 AFTER LAST-MINUTE EFFORTS BY MINED TO SETTLE DEMANDS FOR HIGHER PAY AND AMENDMENT OF LAWS GOVERNING TEACHING PROFESSION FAILED.

2. GOL, CONCERNED THAT DEMANDS OF PRIVATE TEACHERS COULD SPARK ADDITIONAL CLAIMS BY TEACHERS (ALREADY RECEIVING HIGHER SALARIES THAN STRIKERS) IN GOVT SCHOOLS, SOUGHT TO HEAD OFF STRIKE AND HAS SINCE ATTEMPTED UNSUCCESSFULLY TO RESOLVE ISSUES. COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING JAN 8 FORMED CABINET COMMISSION TO STUDY QUESTION, BUT BODY HAS THUS FAR FAILED PRODUCE ACCEPTABLE COMPROMISE. PROBLEM IS FURTHER COMPLICATED BY RIVALRY OF UNIONS REPRESENTING STRIKERS WHICH REFUSE TO MEET TOGETHER WITH AUTHORITIES. STRIKING TEACHERS, MANY OF WHOM ARE KNOWN TO BE RECEIVING SALARIES SUBSTANTIALLY BELOW MINIMUM WAGE, UNLIKELY BE MOLLIFIED BY EXPECTED

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CABINET DECISION JAN 15 TO GRANT TEN PERCENT COST-OF-

LIVING INCREASE GENERALLY AND WILL PROBABLY HOLD OUT
FOR UPWARD REVISION OF SALARY SCALES FOR TEACHERS IN
PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS.

3. COMMENT: CONTINUING STRIKE APPEARS BE AROUSING
RESENTMENT OF PUBLIC--ESPECIALLY PARENTS OF MORE THAN
200,000 AFFECTED STUDENTS--AGAINST EVERYONE FROM PRES
FRANGIE TO STRIKING TEACHERS. WHILE THIS PARTICULAR
STRIKE NOT OF CRUCIAL CONCERN TO GOL, IT IS DEMONSTRATIVE
OF GROWING EMPLOYEE CONCERN WITH EFFECTS OF INFLATION IN
LEBANON. IT ALSO FOLLOWS PRE-CHRISTMAS STRIKE BY BANK
EMPLOYEES WHICH MANY IN GOL, INCLUDING PRES FRANGIE,
ATTRIBUTED TO "FOREIGN" POLITICAL MOTIVATIONS.
WALKOUT OF TEACHERS, MOREOVER, OCCURS AGAINST POSSIBILITY
OF STRIKE THREAT BY EMPLOYEES OF AUTONOMOUS OFFICES (E.G.,
TOBACCO MONOPOLY, ELECTRICITY, RAILWAY, BUS LINES, PORT,
WATER, AND BEIRUT MUNICIPALITY) FOR JAN 16 UNLESS DEMANDS
FOR UPWARD REVISION OF PAY SCALES ARE MET. LATTER STRIKE,
UNLIKE THAT BY TEACHERS, CLEARLY MORE SERIOUS BUT PROBABLY
CAN BE AVERTED BY COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT ANTICIPATED
FROM TODAY'S CABINET MEETING.

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